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THE WOUNDED SOLDIER.

BY REV. JOHN E. EDWARDS.

In the earlier part of the bloody war now raging in the land, the bare sight of a wounded soldier awakened the liveliest sympathy in the bosom of every beholder. No matter where he was met—in the railroad car, in the hospital, upon the street, or in the domestic circle—a responsive chord was touched in every heart, and the father with grey hairs, and the mother, bearing the marks of "wrinkled care" upon her brow, young men and maidens vied with each other to relieve the sufferer, and contribute something to his comfort and restoration to soundness again. One of the sad effects of the progress of this terrible war has been to deaden our sympathies, and make us more selfish than we were when the tocsin of the battle-strife first sounded in the land. Neither men nor women are as eager now as formerly to give the best seat in the car to the wounded soldier—to yield the pavement on the side-walk, lest he should be jostled—to stand by his couch of suffering—to apply the refreshing cordial to his lips, and the cooling water to his wounds. Perhaps this state of public feeling was to have been anticipated. The *frequency* with which we meet the wounded in a battle, and the *long time* we have been accustomed to meet them, has robbed the spectacle of its novelty, and, by a law of our being, has taken off the

edge of our sensibilities. And yet, the wounded soldier is an object of interest. Every patriotic heart in our Southern Confederacy beats with a quicker pulse, and glows with a warmer devotion to our struggle for independence, at the sight of the brave man—be he officer or private, young or old—from his mansion of elegance or his home of poverty—who has been wounded in the defence of our cause against an aggressive and despotic power. Whether stretched upon his bunk in the hospital, with shattered bones or amputated limbs; whether his features are distorted with agonizing pain, or vary in expression, as, in his unbroken slumbers, he dreams of home and friends far away; whether with hand in sling, or splinted arm, or bandaged brow; whether he bend on his cane, or hobble with a crutch, or limp as he leans on the arm of his friend, or sits in pensive sadness by the wayside, he is an object of interest to the passer-by; and, in very many instances, of much deeper interest than is supposed by the wounded soldier himself.

You, my friendly reader, I take it for granted, are a *wounded soldier*. As such I address you. It matters not when or where the death-dealing missile of the enemy struck you—whether in the hard fought battle, or in the hotly contested skirmish; whether in the successive engagements in the Valley and among the mountains of Virginia, or in the protracted series of bloody battles before Richmond; whether among the swamps and lagoons of the South, or beyond the Mississippi in the West; whether at Shiloh or Donelson—no matter when or where, you are a wounded soldier. Nor is it material whether the wound be slight or severe; whether it shall barely leave a scar, or send you upon your crutch to the grave. At present, whatever be the character or extent of the wound, you are off of duty. You spend your time in the hospital, or in the private residence of a friend, or at your own quiet home. You are looking forward to a partial recovery and a final discharge from the service, or to restoration to your accustomed soundness, and a return to duty again. You are wholly or partially confined. In any event, you have time for reflection, for reading, and, *if a Christian*, for profitable meditation and prayer.

What *effect* has your wounding had upon you? is the question I propound to you. It were unfortunate if it merely led to a flippant remark, and in a feeling of self-congratulation that, for a while, you would be released from the hardships of the camp and the dangers of battle.

"The wound is very slight," say you. "It would be foolish and farcical for me to be serious and thoughtful about it. I was *lucky*. The *casualty* might have been much worse." An Atheist might use such language; or even a Deist, who discards the doctrine of God's special providence over us. But such language is not befitting the lips of one who believes the Bible, and who has been favored with a religious education. Do you not know that the Great Teacher sent from God, has taught you that "the very hairs of your head are all numbered," and that "a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without your heavenly Father?" Your *life* is in the hands of God, and, of consequence, all the little incidents and events that in any way affect your life, The wound of which you speak so lightly should not be put down to the credit of mere luck or chance. You should rather regard it as a merciful providence of God that it was not worse. *Some* that were near you in the struggle, while the death-shots were whistling around you, and the bursting shells were shrieking like fiends of hell above you, sustained far more serious damage than yourself. You should be grateful that you fared so well. God's good hand, in preserving you, should be devoutly recognized and acknoweledged. The slightly wounded, who speak in terms of merriment and bravado of the loss of a finger or a mere scratch from the fragment of a shell, may be a fearless soldier, but is greatly wanting in Christian sentiment, and is deficient in the elements of a Bible education.

Again, it were to be deplored if your wounding has had the effect to embitter your feelings, and render you crabbed and morose. Too many, under painful dispensatiions of Providence, turn the edge of an unsubdued temper against God, and become sour and acrimonious towards those around them. It is foolish to murmur against God. "Why should a *living* man complain?" Rather thank God that you are

not dead. The shot or shell that bereft you of a limb, or disfigured your face, or inflicted a painful and serious wound upon your body, might have entered a vital part, and hurried you instantly into eternity. What a God's mercy that your life was spared—that your probation was not suddenly terminated—that you were not, in the twinkling of an eye, hastened to your reward in another state of being! Bow down with cheerful resignation to the will of God, and solemnly purpose, by His grace to derive moral lessons from the providence which has permitted you to be disabled. It may be turned to good account in your moral discipline; and in the day of eternity you may have occasion to thank God for that, over which you now so bitterly complain. If you have not learned to go to Jesus with your sufferings, *go now*. Remember that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for iniquities"—that He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"—that His hands, and feet, and heart were pierced; and that "upon Him was laid the iniquity of us all." He knows how to sympathize with you. His love never grows cold. His heart of tenderness is always responsive to the cries of a wounded and a contrite spirit. Your sufferings, great as they are, do not exceed your deserts. As a sinner, you have offended God, and wounded Christ, and grieved His Spirit, and might, long since, have been consigned to the perdition of hell.

It may be that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness foresaw that nothing less than the calamity under which you are now suffering would bring you to repentance and salvation.—God's design is to bring good out of this temporary evil to you. You may frustrate His beneficent purpose. You may harden yourself, and grow from bad to worse. On the other hand, you may submit yourself to the chastening rod of your Heavenly Father, and find that you derive "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," which result to those who are properly exercised under His correction. If your heart relents—if you feel that you have "the broken spirit and the contrite heart"—if you feel sorry for your sins, and purpose to give them all up, at once and forever; then go at once to Him who has

"A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears;"

and while the words of penitent confession are on your lips, faith will spring up spontaneously in the heart under the influence of Divine grace, and you will find, to the joy of your disconsolate spirit, that

"Earth hath no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal."

You are in great danger of becoming hardened under your sufferings. There is a foolish notion, too prevalent among soldiers, that it is unmanly to manifest any *feeling* under the pressure of bereavment or mental distress—that it is unsoldierly to exhibit any emotion under the most excruciating pain—that it is womanly and childish to weep. Too many have made up their minds that a profession of religion is incompatible with the profession of arms. This is all a mistake. The New Testament furnishes us with some of the most illustrious examples of godly lives, and of all-conquering faith, among the soldiery in the days of our Saviour upon this earth. *Cornelius*, mentioned in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, was "a *centurion* [captain] of the band called the Italian band. A *devout man*, and one that *feared God with all his house*, which gave much alms to the people, *and prayed to God always.*" This Cornelius sent "*a devout soldier*" with his household servants, after Peter, who was to open the gospel ministry at Cesarea. Again, in the seventh chapter of Matthew, we have a case recorded of Christ's healing the servant of a *centurion*, or military officer, in which he passed the highest commendation upon his faith. It is recorded that, when Jesus heard what the centurion said, "he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

A life of piety is not incompatible with the profession of arms. True religion does not interfere with a man's duties to his country. On the contrary, it eminently qualifies him for the faithful discharge of those duties. Discard, therefore, the notion that you cannot be a *Christian* while in the

military service of your country. Banish the idea that it is unmanly to weep, or to exhibit any concern upon the subject of religion. Washington was a Christian. Havelock was as eminent for his piety as for his bravery. Yield to those feelings that now lead you to bow in penitence at the Cross. Embrace Christ Jesus as your Redeemer, Saviour, Friend. Defer it not for a single hour. Come to Jesus just as you are—

"Bruised and mangled by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all."

"Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Christ is ready to heal your wounds; to bind up the broken heart; to set the captive soul at liberty; to pour the balm of gospel grace upon your bleeding spirit, and fully restore you to moral health and soundness again. With the love of God in your heart, and the sweet hope of eternal life before you, your hard camp bed will be as soft as down; your coarse and homely fare will be thankfully received; your privations will be cheerfully borne; and, with a calm resignation to the will of God, you can patiently bear up under your sufferings, and look forward with joyful hope to the hour that shall terminate your bodily pains, and introduce you to the society and enjoyments of the redeemed in Heaven—

"Where the war-drums throb no more,
And the battle-flags are furl'd."

What will you gain by declining to act upon the directions given in the pages of this tract? Suppose you become stoical. Suppose you act upon the false sentiment that it is unsoldlerly to show any feeling. Suppose you successfully smother down your sensibilities, and repress your rising emotions. What then? Your comrades may compliment you, and call you brave and heroic. Suppose you drive away serious thoughts, and grieve God's Spirit that now

waits to sanctify your afflictions, and lead you to the cross of Jesus. What then? This may be heaven's last effort to save you. Refuse to repent and turn to the Saviour now, and another offer of salvation may never be made to you. The wound in your body may not heal. It may grow worse, day by day, until death steps in to do his office, and summon you to the judgment. Or, should you recover, it may be only to go into battle again, to fall *suddenly*, without a lingering wound—to go from the gory bed of death, amid the roar of artillery and the dying groans of the slaughtered around you, into the presence of a neglected Saviour and an insulted God, to hear the fearful and appalling sentence, "Depart, *depart*– into the blackness of darkness forever." Once more the writer, who is a stranger to you, and whose face you may never see till we meet in judgment, entreats you to repent and come to Jesus. His arms are open to receive you. With more than the compassion of your own father who loves you; with more than the tenderness with which your mother would embrace her long absent boy; with more affection than brother, sister, wife or friend would greet you on your return from the wars, will Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, hasten to meet and receive you. Do not lay down this tract till you solemnly resolve, by the help of Heaven, to profit by the lessons which God designs to teach by "the casualities of war," as they are called, through which you have passed and are now passing.

But my reader may be a Christian. How have you been affected by your wounding? Have you murmured against God? Have you said it was a hard lot that you should suffer far away from home and friends? Well, it is hard in a certain sense. You are deprived, it may be, of the comforts and sympathies of home. You may not have those around you who would so much delight to dress your wounds and soothe your pains. You may keenly feel, where you now are, that

"There is a lack of woman's nursing,
And dearth of woman's tears."

This may all be so; and yet, "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Wife, mother, sister and little ones may not be near. The maimed and halt may be your companions. Scenes of suffering and distress may greet you on every hand. Your companions in arms, one after another, may be carried to the grave. But still God is very good to you. It might be much worse with you than it really is. The wound which disables you might be worse. Thank God that your life is spared. Cheer up. Bear your privations and sufferings with Christian resignation. You can yet do something for your dear Redeemer's cause. If not by *active labors*, at least by the exercise and manifestation of the *passive virtues*. By gentleness, patience, and long-suffering—by humble resignation in the Divine will, and by earnest prayer, you can show forth the sustaining power of the religion of Jesus: and thus you may impress the minds of others, as they never would be affected by the active duties of religion. You may now do a work for God's cause that you could not accomplish in any other way. Take patiently your afflictions. God's hand is in them, and when the light of eternity shall clear up the mists and mysteries of time, you will shout and rejoice over that which now extracts your bitterest tears. Your sojourn on earth is brief. Heaven will richly reward you for all the sorrows and afflictions of this life; for, saith the Apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

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